1987

Oral History Interview: Dr. Charles Moffat

Charles Moffat

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ORAL HISTORY

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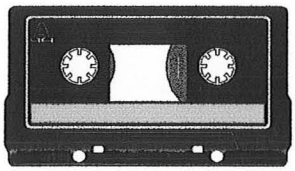

AN ORAL INTERVIEW WITH: DR. CHARLES MOFFAT

CONDUCTED BY: DR. ROBERT SAWREY

DATE OF INTERVIEW: DECEMBER 14, 1987

SUBJECT: MARSHALL HISTORY

TRANSCRIPTIIONIST/TYPIST: GINA KEHALI KATES

RS: This is Robert Sawrey. I am in my office in Smith Hall. Today's date is December 14th, 1987. Today I will be interviewing Dr. Charles Moffat, professor emeritus at Marshall University, in the Marshall University History Department for the Marshall University Sesquicentennial Oral History project. Dr. Moffat, could you give me the circumstances of your family background and growing up, your parents names....

CM: Well, I was born in the town of Houston, Mississippi, not Houston, Texas, in 1912, a son of a lawyer. Moved from there when I was six to Senatobia, Mississippi. That's Indian for white sycamore.

RS: Okay, how about you spell that one for us?

CM: S-e-n-a-t-o-b-i-a. (RS: Okay) That's thirty-eight miles below Memphis, Tennessee.

RS: A river city?

CM: No, it's not on the river. Thirty-eight miles from Memphis on the main line of the Illinois Central. That was important in those days. Now, five fifty-five. So I was reared there, you might say, from the time I was six, graduated 'Old Miss.'

RS: Let's back up, let's not go quite that fast. What were your parents' names?

CM: Charles and Mary. Charles Moffat and Mary Ellis.

RS: Maiden name was Ellis, E-l-l-i-s?

CM: She was a daughter of a doctor, local doctor.

RS: Okay, they're both folks from Houston, Mississippi?

CM: No. She was from Senatobia. (RS: Oh, okay) Yes. And her father was, you might say, a country doctor. Country, I mean a town of 1500 people.

RS: And your, where did your father go to law school?

CM: Cumberland University at Lebanon, Tennessee. Now, that has been moved, lock, stock and barrel, to Birmingham, where it's a part of Sanford University. It's now called Cumberland Univ-, Cumberland Law School of Sanford University, in the city of Birmingham, Alabama. Went up there [inaudible]..... They moved it from Lebanon, Tennessee to Birmingham. I guess that's been eighteen, twenty years ago.

The school is still, as you see, Bible. And it was the alma mater of Cardell Hull, who later became secretary of state. And Keith Pittman, United States Senate in Nevada, back in the '30s. It was a pretty fair law school at the turn of the century. I don't know how it is now.

RS: Okay. And then you went to elementary, grade school, high school....

CM: Yes, all my elementary and secondary education was in the town of Senatobia, public school.

RS: And growing up there, did you envision being a historian?

CM: I felt that that was what I wanted in the tenth grade.

RS: How did you decide that?

CM: I had a high school principal that convinced me that'd be a good field. He influenced me more than any other educator at that time, a man named Lewis, who later died in an automobile/train collision. But he's the one that suggested it.

RS: Was he one of the teaching historians at the school?

CM: Well, he'd teach some. He'd teach a class in American history.

RS: Okay. And then....

CM: But he was primarily an administrator, a principal, yes.

RS: And then about what? 1929, 1930 you went down to Old Miss?

CM: Old Miss in 1933. 1933. I had gone to a junior college in my hometown from '31 to '33.

RS: In Senatobia?

CM: Yes, what they called Northwest Mississippi Junior College.

RS: Is that still in existence?

CM: Oh, yes, very much so.

RS: And so you were a junior when you got down to Oxford? (CM: That's right) Okay. And were by then formally committed to history? (CM: That's right) Okay. Were there professors at Old Miss that, good ones.?

CM: Very good. Charles _____ was there, who had written on Southern sectionalism a whole lot. Later moved to Duke. Of course, Lee Rainwater was there, who wrote the doctoral dissertation at Chicago on Mississippi Storm Center Secession. Both of them were very able historians. And they had a woman named Evelyn Wade. It was a small school in those days. About 1500 students. Now it has ten thousand.

RS: And, as an undergraduate did you concentrate in Southern history, or just all history?

CM: Not necessarily Southern history. It wasn't that specialized.

RS: How about in graduate school?

CM: Yes, I went on to Vanderbilt. American history, you might say.

RS: Okay. Did you go directly from the University of Mississippi to Vanderbilt?

CM: No, I taught in public schools in North Carolina and Alabama. I taught in a boys

school in Anderson, South Carolina, and I taught in an educational public school in Gordo, Alabama, near Tuscaloosa.

RS: Okay. While you were doing that, did you hope to go to graduate school? Were you trying to accumulate money to go to graduate school?

CM: Yes, that's right. I got a fellowship, teaching fellowship. It aided me considerably.

RS: Okay. And then when did you arrive at Vanderbilt?

CM: 1944. June, 1944. Started teaching Naval ROTC students, at least for four months. Then assumed this position teaching freshman during my stay at Vanderbilt. So I had two different positions, teaching Naval ROTC students. They were to be commission officers in the Navy. This was war time, you know.

RS: And were you then married?

CM: Oh, yes. I had a child.

RS: Let's back up a bit and bring your wife in here. How did you and your wife meet?

CM: We met teaching in the high school in Alabama.

RS: In Alabama. (CM: That's right) So she was already a college teacher?>

CM: She was teaching home economics. She's a graduate of Alabama College for Women. They call it Alabama College.

RS: And she's a native of....

CM: A native of Alabama, near Birmingham.

RS: Okay. And when were you married?

CM: 1938.

RS: 1938.

CM: Fifty years ago, next January, next month.

RS: Boy, that's an accomplishment. That will be kind of exciting for you.

CM: Yes, we're planning a little anniversary.

RS: A little one? I bet you more than a little. [laughing] (CM: That's right) Okay, so you were married in '38 and you were still teaching in Gordo, Alabama? (CM: That's right) And you just mentioned a while ago you had a child by the time you got to Vanderbilt.

CM: Yes, the child was born in 1942.

RS: Okay, and where were you at that time?

CM: Still in Gordo.

RS: Still in Gordo. Okay. Then '44 comes and you go to Vanderbilt?

CM: In '42 I moved on to South Carolina. Anderson. A boy's high school.

RS: Did your wife, then, stay home or continue....obviously she was teaching home ec.

CM: Part of the time she taught home ec in the girls high school. It was one of the few cities in the South that had segregated high schools for the different genders. One for girls, one for boys. (RS: You mean for the public?) Public schools. The only others I had was Atlanta and Albany, Georgia. And Charleston, South Carolina. Public boys high school. And the girls high school. Those four or five cities likewise segregated the sexes.

RS: Okay. So now we're back to Nashville in '44 and I would assume you had to do some course work in addition to you teaching.

CM: Oh, yes, I had, I had gathered some graduate hours at the University of North

Carolina. A total of twelve. I had accumulated fifteen post-masters courses at the University of Alabama. Although, Alabama at that time didn't offer the doctorate. They still had a lot of courses beyond the MA. But not yet offering the doctorate. So I asked four universities, would they accept these courses. I had it in writing before I ever took the courses. And three out of four said they would.

RS: And then...

CM: Vanderbilt was one of them.

RS: One of them. And they....

CM: The only one that wouldn't was Ohio State. (RS: So Vanderbilt...) But Texas would. And Vanderbilt would, and North Carolina would. But Ohio State wouldn't. So I just held those letters, you see. I knew I was safe. So I had fifteen additional hours there, and then twelve more from North Carolina. That meant a total of twenty-seven semester hours before I arrived in Nashville. (RS: You had a good running start, didn't you?) And that shortened my stay. I was there two full years at Vanderbilt.

RS: What professors at Vanderbilt particularly?

CM: Frank Isley. Who at that time, I would say, was the best known and one of the most controversial of the Southern historians. Frank Isley.

RS: By the time you had studied under him or with him, were you pretty much convinced you would be middle....

CM: I had studied under some of the men that he had taught. Good old Miss and Alabama. They were Isley disciples, you might say. Jim Silver, who later became pretty well-known for a book he wrote called Mississippi Clothes Society, Jim Silver.

And Clint Williams, who later became president of the University of Houston. But they were Isley disciples, as I said.

RS: What did you do your dissertation on?

CM: Charles Tait, T-a-i-t, planter, statesman, scientist, of the old South. Though it wasn't published in [inaudible]....you can find it in a publication and anthology, published by the University of Illinois Press. It's a summary, you might say, of a doctoral dissertation, in article form, that is to be found in this Town and Country, I believe they call it, Plantation Life in the Old South. It's an anthology, University of Illinois Press.

RS: Illinois Press, okay.

CM: It came out about 1975.

RS: This Tait fellow, was he the secession period?

CM: No, he was [inaudible]...United States senator from Georgia. Something of a geologist, member of the American Natural History Society, I believe they call it, in Philadelphia. And a big planter.

RS: How did you encounter his records?

CM: I encountered him through Clemente Eaton, the veteran and greatly beloved historian at the University of Kentucky, Clemente Eaton. He and I were walking through the Hermitage, in Nashville, when the the Southern Historical Convention was being held in that city, November 1944. He said, "What are you writing about? What's your thesis?" I said, "I haven't been here but a few months. I don't have one yet." He suggested this. Said, "There's a big pile of papers relative to that in the state archives

in Montgomery. Why don't you go down there and look?" So I did. And it was, the topic was approved by the senior professors. They seemed to think that'd be very good, because of the rich source of material. Ube Philips had used those papers in preparing life and labor in the Old South in American Negro Slavery. He acknowledges that. So that's how it came about, through Clemente Eaton, who wrote Freedom of Thought in the Old South, and wrote A Life of Clay, and A Study of Confederacy and many other books.

RS: I think they're all right behind you, Dr. Moffat. I think they're all on the shelves right behind you. Pretty basic stuff. Not basic in a sense of simple, but basic to a library. Okay. So you, you finished your degree at Vanderbilt? (CM: In 1946) And were ready to enter the job market?

CM: Well, I wrote to some 25 colleges and universities where I thought I would stand a fair chance. You can surmise that I didn't write to Harvard or Yale or Stanford. I wrote to somewhere I thought I would be received. At least 25. I found a book in the library that gave a detailed description of all the universities, including their departments. The most detailed publication I ever saw. And frankly, Marshall looked very good to me. So it was one of the 25 to which I wrote. But other places being Memphis State and Birmingham Southern, Southwestern Memphis and also, Southwestern Georgetown Texas. I did not write to the same institutions that has since then became rather prominent in the South, but were not so 41 years ago. And I have referenced, particularly schools like Western Carolina.

RS: I'm sure there are not a huge number....

CM: East Tennessee. East Tennessee is another one to which I didn't write.

RS: Yes, the South has changed rather drastically.

CM: Yes, a lot of these institutions like Marshall, they have grown. But even in 1946, Marshall had a strong Arts and Science college. I could tell that from reading about it. [inaudible]...to a teachers college. Which was untrue of East Tennessee State, Appalachian, Western Carolina, places like that. In other words, Marshall looked pretty good from my point of view. Therefore, I sent them a letter.

RS: How did your wife and family respond to living so far up north?

CM: They didn't mind that. They didn't mind that.

RS: Did you find the culture much different?

CM: Oh no, not here. You might around Cleveland or Detroit or Buffalo, but not here.

RS: So, would you consider it fair to suggest that Huntington does have a definite Southern flavor? (CM: Yes, mmm-hmm) Okay. How many people were in the department that you joined?

CM: I made the fifth.

RS You were the fifth. Go ahead.

CM: Dr. [inaudible]...was chairman, John Klinger was next in seniority.

RS: Could you spell that name?

CM: Klinger, K-l-i-n-g-e-r. They had Lloyd Brown from Fairmont. He got his MA at WVU, working on his doctorate at Ohio State. And a lady named Chapman, Lucille Chapman, University of Kentucky Ph.D. I made the fifth. But in rank and in salary, I ranked third of those five. Because Lloyd didn't have his doctorate and Chapman was

really rather temporary. It was understand that she would be.

RS: Did she...but she had her doctorate though

CM: Yes. But she was temporary. I was to be permanent. I succeeded in a man named Hedrick, what I taught Hedrick had taught these American history courses. So my position was to be permanent, succeeding Dr. Hedrick.

RS: What happened to him?

CM: He was supposed to retire because he was 65. They had let him go on, prior to that. The state of West Virginia has flip-flopped all along on this question of the retirement. They had no consistent policy for about 30 years.

RS: So at one point....

CM: And prior to 1946, they did not have to retire at 65. In April of '46 they changed that rule, that you do have to retire at 65. So that meant Hedrick would be relieved of his position by September. So I succeeded Hedrick insofar as what I taught was concerned. Not in rank, because he was the chairman. He had been the chairman.

RS: What variety of courses did you teach right off?

CM: The frontier, Civil War and reconstruction, the South, and contemporary America, 1900.

RS: Okay, so you arrived here at not exactly, but very close to the same time that the folks were taking advantage of the GI Bill? (CM: Yes) Were...

CM: That was the year of the great influx, 1946. Not only of students but of new faculty. That was the year they all referred to as "so and so came here".

RS: How many-, how large were your classes?

CM: Oh, I'd say 25 to 30. Except graduate classes. That's another reason I wanted to come here. I could teach graduate classes. (RS: And did you....) I'm not leaving the impression that I was overwhelmed with offers. But I could have gone to other places, but would be teaching somewhat out of my field. I didn't want to teach western civ., [civics] I didn't want to teach solely freshman. This seemed to be made to order. Certainly I was teaching what I had been trained to teach. And graduate courses, too.

RS: You said that you came in at a certain level above beginning.

CM: I came in as associate professor. Lloyd Brown assistant and so was Lucille Chapman. But she was just an interim teacher. She left within two years. Lloyd left within two years, went back to the Navy.

RS: Did you have...did you go through the same type of tenure process that say for example, I might have?

CM: Well, you could get tenure or not get it within three years. At the end of three. At the end of three years, I received tenure. That means in 1949, spring of that year.

RS: And upon what were those judgements based in those days?

CM: Mostly, frankly performance as a teacher, not as a research scholar.

RS: And did that suit your preferences at the time?

CM: Yes. Oh, during that interim, the three years, I did have an article published in the Journal of Southern History. Which was a small achievement, but at least it was a small publication and the third largest historical association journal.

RS: Yes, that's not a small achievement.

CM: Actually, mostly performance in classroom and general repute, in which teachers

were held. But I want to emphasis that it really, in those days, based upon research. Because administration was too busy get those to finish their degrees. Much less do research.

RS: Did the history department, not just in these first three years you were here, but throughout the '50s and '60s, let's say, and even the '70s, have pretty good luck at attracting finished....

CM: Indeed, they acquired Betty Commati, who came about 1950 and stayed about twenty years, I guess, went on to WVU. Which she was a research scholar. She was a Fulbright Scholar, University of Rome. She indeed was a productive scholar, the most productive in the department. We also were able to acquire a man from the University of North Dakota who received his doctorate at WVU and he told me his wife was getting tired of that cold weather up there. So he came here, a man named Wilkins. Stayed here three years. He was above average for Marshall, as a productive scholar. We acquired an Ohio State ph.d. who's now deceased, from I believe Elyria, Ohio. He had his doctorate from Ohio State. So that made three right there. (RS: Let's go back to...) And there are others who came for summer school. Several we had were summer school. (RS: Like Bill Barnes) That's right. Then I exchanged one summer with a professor at WVU, Barnes came here, I went up there. We traded for the summer. 1951.

RS: Tell me a little bit about Dr. Toole, as a colleague, as a boss?

CM: He was a very loyal colleague. Very much so. We all felt secure. Because Toole was a man of influence. He had a lot of clout. He had been here since the late 1920s.

He had a doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania, an MA from the University of Chicago, no question about his competency. It was really an educational experience working for Toole, working with him. He taught me a good deal. (RS: In what way?) He was twenty years older than I. He had more experiences. [inaudible]...from the first World War. He taught at New York University for a year or two. He was a friend like [inaudible]....

RS: What was his, let's say, managerial style like? As a chairperson?

CM: Well, in those days, departments were not as democratic as they are today. There was no such thing as rotation. He remained chairman until he was 70 years old. In those days, you could go to 70. (RS: Until the state changed its mind again) Yes.

RS; So when did he retire?

CM: I wouldn't say he was a dictator, but he exercised more authority than chairmen do today. I'd say he retired, I think I'm right, 1964. And died about two years later. Then Dr. Heath served for five years. I served for nine. In the chairmanship.

RS: Okay. Let's, let's deal with Dr. Heath, then we'll go backwards in time just a little bit. By the time that Dr. Heath became the chair, was the department a little bit larger?

CM: It didn't really grow very much. It still remained four or five. Until I became chairman during the middle period of my tenure. We begun to add people. The last one added while I was chairman was Dr. Spindel. I think that was 1976.

RS: Was part of the lack of growth due to this situation where we've got a social studies department?

CM: That's it, that had a lot do with it. But that wasn't exclusively it. That wasn't entirely

it. If you look at the college record, you'll find that political science was about the same size. So was economics. So was psychology. (RS: Were you people...) I realize they've all proliferated since. But since I haven't been in in ten years and haven't studied the catalogue, I don't know exactly how many in those departments. But we all were about the same size. But what did stunt our growth, of course, numerically, from an instructional point of view, was the creation of the department of social studies approximately 1949, or '50. Because they would teach West Virginia History, which we were competent to teach. They would teach world civilization, which of course, we could teach.

RS: How did that happen? Was that pure power politics? Or was there some academic connection?

CM: Well, one would seem to think, as I bring out in my history of Marshall, that teachers needed a different type of curriculum from liberal arts people. In other words, a different type of mathematics. A different type of English, a different type of history, that was his point of view. Therefore, he.....

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CM: . . . history, English, mathematics. And perhaps, psychology. Though I'm not absolutely sure about that. But I think that's right. That was his point of view, D. Banks Wilburn. I mean, he did build the teachers college from a faculty of about ten to forty or more.

RS: Now, at that time, was there just, there was a Marshall College. It was not a university? (CM: No) Was there only one dean then? And he was dean over all of it?

CM: They had a dean of the teachers college, they had a dean of the graduate school, they had a dean of arts and science.

RS: So we did have an arts and science?

CM: But many institutions today will call them colleges when they really should have been universities, like Penn State, Iowa State, Michigan State, all those were called colleges until a few years ago. They acquired the title, university. It's true of Marshall. Except we didn't have the great variety of colleges that Penn State did, of course.

RS: Okay. Did the history department fight that as much as they could?

CM: We didn't like it, but we couldn't do anything about it. The administration seemed to go along with Wilburn on it.

RS: Okay. Earlier...

CM: But in general, the history department did not like it, if that answers the question.

RS: Early fifties, we had a national phenomena that seemed not to be particularly conducive to diversity of opinion in America. The power of the McCarthy supporters (CM: Mmm-hmm) and the McCarthyism. And there were some examples in the state of West Virginia where faculty who apparently found themselves exposed in certain kinds of ways, or in tenuous situations, were actually relieved in their positions for basically political reasons. Did anything of that type happen at Marshall? Was there any way that you knew as of mid-career or younger faculty member that certain kinds of things were acceptable, certain things were because of the national climate.

CM: I don't know of anyone that was removed for, because of his political persuasion or his ideological beliefs. There were some removals for other reasons. But I don't think it

was political or ideological. I don't think so. Marshall was relatively free of that type of interference.

RS: Would that have been something that came down from the top, a president who was strong and secure, or...?

CM: Stewart Smith was president from 1946 until 1970. That's a very long tenure. And I can't recall that he ever impended upon one's classroom's point of view, or one's political attitudes. I can't remember that he did.

RS: How about...did be set such an example that no one would?

CM: I think so, yeah. As I said, certain people didn't get tenure and certain people were removed. But I can't recall it was because of ideology or politics. (RS: Just the basic kind of stuff) Yes, that's right. It wasn't politics and it wasn't ideology. We were remarkably free of that type of interference.

RS: What kind of campus politics was going on in the '50s or '60s as a faculty member? How was the faculty governed?

CM: Governed mostly by committees. Like the College Counsel, the Athletic Committee. This thing with the Faculty Senate, you know, is very recent. They talked a lot about it, but did nothing. Governed by the deans and president.

RS: If you had to try to determine who held the upper hand, in the let's say '50s, would it have been faculty or administration?

CM: I expect the administration.

RS: Would that have held to it through the '60s? (CM: Yes) Were you comfortable with that as a faculty member?

CM: It didn't seem to phase us.

RS: Did you play a role in faculty governance? Or college governance, either one?

CM: About the only active role I ever played was I was chairman of the college council, which is today the University Council. Then I was director of the honors program for a long time. (RS: How long were you chairman?) I also had to serve on various committees. But principally, my activity was confined to the honors council. The honors committee.

RS: Okay.

CM: The Honors Program, maybe that's the correct word.

RS: When was that, Dr. Moffat?

CM: 1962 was when it was organized.

RS: And were you the first director or whatever you want to call it?

CM: That's right.

RS: And how long did you hold that position?

CM: Roughly ten years. And it had various and sundry other directors, like Duncan Williams, who's now deceased, professor of English, Mike Galgano.

RS: There's obvious reasons why a college would want an honors program. But why did Marshall move forward with one....

CM: [inaudible]....put aside when he came here in the '20s or maybe early '30s. He had designated a course in chemistry. Then I believe he had something to do with designating a course in political science, the starred courses. And only the best students were allowed to enroll. That's the incipiency of it. But it was not a program, per se. It was just two or three departments that had special courses for advanced students. So he had had that

on mind since early '30s. In 1942 he asked me to take this project. And he sent me to Southern Illinois University to study their program, and sent me to the University of Virginia to a convention. He sent me to Atlanta, another convention. Because it was right after Sputnik was launched, people were there, Russian advances. I don't know how its functioning now. I just don't know. But that's how it began in 1962.

RS: As director, were you working, maybe I'm creating an artificial distinction here. But toward let's say honors seminars that were all by themselves, or were you working....?

CM: We had honors seminars and we had a separate house for that, over where the tennis courts are now. Near the Christian Center. (RS: Oh, okay, on 5th Avenue) we had a separate house. A man who later moved to Ohio Wesleyan was the first director of the seminar. They called it an interdisciplinary seminar. It received a small contribution from some of the townspeople. A man named Polan, Polan Industries. But that was not considerable.

RS: Did you also attempt to get more departments to create their honors courses?

CM: Worked at it for ten years to try to get most of them to join it. Many of them did.

RS: Did the history department have some of those kinds of courses at one time?

CM: I can't recall. I think so.

RS: I've always wished we had some right now. Did you get satisfaction from that position?

CM: Oh, yes. But I was ready to give it up. Because I got tired of trying to induce various departments to join it, you know. Ten or twelve years is enough. But at least it was launched. And we had annual convocations, in which all the students who had ever

received an academic honor of any type, were recognized. In fact, an honorary degree was conferred at one of those convocations. A man from Parkersburg, who was an executive in Standard Oil. A native of Parkersburg. I believe that's the only time when an honorary degree was ever conferred at a time other than commencement.

RS: During the '50s and '60s, would it be fair to say that your major contribution to Marshall was in the classroom?

CM: I would think so, that and the honors program.

RS: Were you, and the answer to this I think is fairly obvious from I've heard. But were you the type of teacher who developed an enthusiastic following as far as you know?

CM: That would be immodest to say that much about that. (RS: Well, tell the truth) But I didn't have any more of a following than some of the others. Like they had Green in zoology. Or Herschel Heath in History. I can think of several who had supporters, followers. Of course, I taught a, directed nearly all the theses. Because they didn't write a thesis in European history, so that relieved Heath.

RS: Heath was a European....

CM: Yes, to some extent Betty Commati. Dr. Toole didn't direct the theses, so it was left to me.

RS: Tell me a little bit more about Dr. Heath, as a colleague.

CM: Well, he came here from Pocatello, Idaho, interestingly enough, Idaho State, it was then. Now it's a four-year institution. It was a two-year school then. (RS: Oh, okay) He had taught at the junior college in Kentucky, called the Ashland Junior College. It's now part of the University of Kentucky. In fact, he taught in many states. Beaumont, Texas.

His native Missouri, reared in Kansas, got a doctorate from Clark University and Western Massachusetts. He was a wonderful partner. We'd go to conventions together two or three times a year. You can't imagine a better traveling companion. Never did we have any, was there any friction at all. Perfect harmony between us. Certainly a good man to work with. I expect, really, Dr. Sawrey, that he had as many supporters as I did, Heath did. Frankly, I think he did.

RS: You mentioned a second ago the conferences. One of our big complaints today is there's not enough travel money.

CM: We would get railroad fare.

RS: Railroad fare. (CM: Yes) Other than that....

CM: We'd always, we'd get railroad fare. No more than that. It'd been on the program. But I remember going to Los Angeles and receiving an airplane ticket from the college. They'd give you travel money.

RS: And that was true all the way through your career?

CM: Yes, it was. Now I'm not positive that every department was that fortunate. But I want to emphasize it that Toole was a pretty influential man. I can't sit here and say that every department or every man and woman that went to a convention received travel money. Our department did. And I would surmise that some or many of the others did, too.

RS: Was there a pecking order within the department for going to conferences or was there a system for spending the money that was available?

CM: No, we only had about four people, you see. And not all four would want to go. I can't

recall that Klinger ever went. I can't recall that Lloyd Brown did. Well, not here. For a long period of time. Everyone always wanted to go.

RS: How did you cover classes while you were gone?

CM: Oh, we would leave on Thursday, American Historical was always during Christmas vacation. Classes were no problem. The Southern and the Organization of American Historians were Thursday, Friday and Saturday, we would leave say on Thursday. Miss only one day. We'd usually give a test, have somebody administer a test. That's how we would handle that.

RS: Herman Weill was a colleague for a while, right? (CM: Yes) When did he arrive at Marshall?

CM: He came here at dean during the Barker years. Barker was here 1970 to '74, I think.

RS: I think that's right, I trust you on these dates.

CM: That's right. It's all in my book.

RS: That's right, that's why I figure you know.

CM: He came here from a college in Vermont, as I remember, called Johnson State. A small institution, like Weeba State. One of these 1-AA athletic schools, you know. Johnson State. He had a doctorate from Illinois. And he was a _____ man. He came here as dean of the graduate school. One of the presidents removed him. Because deans don't have tenure, you know. But he had tenure in the history department. Upon which he could fall back upon. And he was transferred to the history department. Some would say that's a demotion. But I personally would not consider a thing like that a demotion, because I'd always rather be a full professor than a dean myself. Let's say he

was transferred from the deanship to the professorship of history.

RS: Was there any problem of fitting him in? Did he become an extra person, or did somebody have to leave?

CM: No, I don't think he did. We had no problem with that.

RS: And how long was he a colleague in the department then?

CM: Only about three years. And he died...almost suddenly. Almost suddenly. I know we were all shocked. Because he had not been ill, to my knowledge. He hadn't been bedridden certainly.

RS: Let's talk just a bit about your years as chairman. Were you burdened by the office? Found it exhilarating?

CM: I didn't especially like the _____, the details of it. But if I may say so and it's the truth, the men would testify it's true, I had pretty good luck in getting them promoted and tenured. And pretty good salaries. They know that. And uh, maybe that's one reason they would tolerate me for nine years.

RS: Well, I was going to ask. What were your goals? Have you already, in effect, stated them?

CM: Yes.

RS: Is that what a chairman...

CM: Wait a minute, we didn't inaugurate many innovations like oral history. I think I brought some mighty good people here with the consent, advice and consent, should I say, of my colleagues. Like I got in Gould, David Woodward, David Duke, Mike Galgano, Donna Spindel, Maddox was already here. Bias was already here.

RS: How would you rate, and I'm not asking you here by person or anything like that, but the strengths of the history department, let's say shortly before you retired, relative to any other time period that you were at Marshall? What were the weaknesses?

CM: Well, they became more productive during the latter part of my tenure, that';s for sure. They were engaged in research. Dr. Woodward was like another Lloyd George. Galgano had various projects, and as I recall, had read a paper at the American Historical in Dallas. Which I think is neat. David Duke was engaged in research that later paid off in publications, all that was happening during the latter part and middle, the latter part of my tenure.

RS: Did any of that in any way hurt the department, that changed the focus in any way, away from teaching? Was there any negative impact on the classroom performance?

CM: No, I wouldn't think so. I don't believe the confidential student evaluation reports, if they still have those things, I guess they do, would indicate that. Frank Allred later spent some time in China. He was employed before I became chairman. He certainly enriched his professional career by going to China. When was that? About a year ago last summer?

RS: Mmm-hmm. If I understand your career correctly, did not engage in great quantities of research while you were teaching, but you have since.

CM: I've written three books since. One is a history of Marshall called <u>An Institution Comes of Age</u>, four years on that. And I spent four years on the history of Cabell County Medical Society. Both are in publication, published form right now. And more recently, a biography of Ken Hechler. Which hit newsstands about four weeks ago. I just came from

the Mall this morning autographing about fifty copies of that for two bookstores. Three books, yes.

RS: Yes, quite clearly then you....

CM: Frankly, Bob, we had such a heavy load, teaching load, during most of my tenure, research just really wasn't feasible.

RS: Well, that's what I was thinking.

CM: I want to add, too, our salaries were such that we needed teachers on extension, but we needed teachers for summer school. And that left little time for serious research.

RS: Did the university have any type of support at all? Were there summer research grants?

CM: No, they didn't know what that sort of thing was.

RS: Nothing like that in those days.

CM: I taught at Marshall thirty-one years. I would say that twenty-seven-eight of those years, they had no support for that.

RS: Well, I promised you toward the end, well, let me ask one question first and then I'll let you sum up your career. We've kind of, not intentionally, but more or less ignored the family here for awhile. Did the family enjoy living in Huntington?

CM: They certainly did. My wife taught at Milton High School for ten years, she taught at Huntington High School for ten years. She taught First Presbyterian kindergarten, since that was somewhat related to her courses in home economics. Yeah, we enjoyed it here.

RS: Was there ever a time when you....

CM: In fact, I don't see how I can pull up roots and leave...at my age.

RS: Was there ever a time in your career when you were looking for a job?

CM: I could have gotten two or three horizontal, made two or three horizontal moves. But what's the reason for that? Why make a lateral move. Because Huntington's a very desirable place to live. In fact, that's one reason many others stayed here. Not to be compelling, not the sole reason. But the contributory reason. It's a desirable place in which to live.

RS: One other question I'll ask you and then I'll get out of the way. Since your departure, we've had parts of one administration and the current administration. What's your assessment of Marshall's direction right now?

CM: Well, I think Dr. Nitzschke is extremely exceptionally competent, able. I could cite and you could, too, many achievements during the past three years. President Smith was here, I mean, President Hayes was here when the new medical school came. That's a coo of great importance. And while he was dean, while Hayes was dean in the college of education, won national accolades. I think both men have been extremely competent and efficient. Hayes and Nitzschke. Barker and Nelson had a difficult time. Their predecessors.

RS: Did you know that we have both of them on tape?

CM: Barker and Nelson?

RS: Yes, we did, had a graduate student go down and do Nelson, who's in Radford, Virginia, is he in North Carolina?

CM: He's in North Carolina.

RS: It's Dedmon in Virginia. We got him, too, and I went out and did Barker out in Texas.

CM: WitchitaFalls?

RS: Yes, interesting little town. He's an interesting chap.

CM: What does he do? Brokerage business?

RS: Yes. He seems to be blending in very well with the country club set. Anyway, how about if you sum up here, say whatever you would like about your career and your experiences at Marshall?

CM: Well, I reiterate. I enjoyed it. Teaching is what I wanted to do. You must remember that I'm a child of the darkest days of The Depression. I came out of high school in 1931. It wasn't a good time to be a country town lawyer. My father thought, and I agreed with him, it's better to get on some kind of a salary. Even though it's not a large salary. I would do it all over again.

RS: That's darn close to the best thing you can say.

CM: That's right. As I told David Woodward and Steve Hatfield, the mathematician, with whom we eat every week at Jim's Restaurant [Jim's Steak and Spaghetti], we're more dealing with normal people in this field. You're not if you're a psychologist, you're not if you're a doctor of medicine, you're not if you're a lawyer, you're not if you're a judge. You stop to think about it, it's easy to be cynical about all of this. But I'm not being cynical. We deal with nearly more normal people in our education field. Those other professional men don't. Social workers, counselors, psychiatrists, legal professionals, they do not. It's a point to consider.

RS: It certainly is.

CM: And you know industry is as such, you can be laid off at any moment. Look what

happened at Huntington Alloys. Not just last week, but during the past several years. It's stable, it's secure. It's for people who like to teach. If you don't, you better stay away from it, because I can't think of anything that would be more boring if you didn't like it. Because, as you know, there's a certain amount of repetition in it.

RS: Okay.....

END OF INTERVIEW